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TOPICS FOR COLLECTION OF FOLK-LORE.

PART I. *a.* ANIMAL AND PLANT LORE.—*b.* MISCELLANEOUS SUPERSTITIONS.  
BY FANNY D. BERGEN.

PART II. *a.* CUSTOMS.—*b.* GAMES.—*c.* LITERATURE. BY WM. W. NEWELL.

PART I.

AN experience of eight years in collecting folk-lore has taught me, among other things, the difficulty of calling to mind, at moments when they are most needed, the various subjects about which questions should be asked. I therefore submit the classification which I have adopted in arranging my own material.<sup>1</sup> In order to make clear the scope of the headings, illustrations of characteristic superstitions or practices are inserted. Any system that can be proposed will upon trial prove somewhat arbitrary; still some kind of working classification is necessary.

I. ANIMAL AND PLANT LORE.

1. *Animal and plant weather-lore.*

*E. g.*, A cat washing her face is a sign of rain. If an ox licks its forefoot, under its "dew-claw," it is a sign of a storm. When the corn-husks are thick, it is a sign of a cold winter coming. Leaves on the trees blowing, so as to show their under sides, sign of rain.

2. *Rhymes or incantations addressed to animals.*

*E. g.*, The familiar rhymes to the lady-bug, or those to cause the grasshopper to spit. Saying "Mumbly-up" repeatedly over an ant-hill will summon the ants to the surface. Then saying "Mumbly-down" will send them back again.

3. *Popular names of animals and of plants*, especially those not mentioned in works on Zoölogy and Botany.

*E. g.*, Snake-feeder for dragon-fly, "ground-pup" or "ground-dog" for the common spotted salamander, jewel-weed, slipper-weed, lady's eardrop, lady's pocket, touch-me-not, for *Impatiens*, "crow-victuals" for *Leonurus*, witches' money-bags for *Sedum telephium*.

4. *The uses of animals and plants in folk-medicine.*

*E. g.*, Oil tried out of angle-worms, by exposure to the sun, will cure rheumatism. A bee-sting may be cured by rubbing it with any three different kinds of leaves. Saffron tea will cure jaundice.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> My own collection embraces material drawn from various portions of the United States and Canada, from English-speaking people of whatever nationality or heredity.

<sup>2</sup> See, also, the writer's article on Animal and Plant Lore, *Popular Science Monthly*, June, 1890.

5. *Omens<sup>1</sup> derived from human beings, animals, or plants.*

*E. g.*, It is unlucky to meet a cross-eyed person. To carry the hand of a dead friend will bring prosperity. The great toe will keep off disease. The toe of an enemy will "conjure" enemies. The bad influences from one who has the evil eye may be averted by sticking an awl in his footprints. The fisherman who meets a lone crow will have no luck. A male cat coming to a house and making friends is a sign of good luck, but the coming of a female cat indicates bad luck. A skunk coming about the house foretells a new courtship. If a cow comes up to the house and licks one of the windows it indicates the approaching death of some one of the family. Don't kill a "lizard" (salamander) or you'll die within the year. The seventeen-year locust has a W on its wings, and foretells war. Peacock feathers about the house are ill-omened and bring disaster. At a wedding, if a spider drop on the bride or on anything that she is carrying, it foretells good luck. A crowing hen is ill-omened, and in many places is killed to avert threatened disaster. Notice the first butterfly that you see in the spring, for you'll have a garment of the same color as the prevailing hue of the insect. If a rabbit crosses the road in front of you it will bring bad luck, unless the ill omen is averted by making a cross in the dirt of the road with the foot and spitting in the cross. When going on a visit, if you meet a pig in the road it is a sign that your visit will be unwelcome. If friends, on one's leaving home, stick a bit of live-for-ever in the ground, it will indicate the fortune of the absent one. If he prospers it flourishes, if not it will wither or die. It is unlucky to keep or cultivate "Wandering Jew" (*Tradescantia*).

6. *Imaginary chemical and physical effects of animal and vegetable substances.<sup>2</sup>*

*E. g.*, Soap can only be made to "come" satisfactorily by stirring it with an ash stick.

7. *Sacred animals and plants.*

*E. g.*, The ass is a sacred animal, because once ridden by Christ, and it has ever since that time borne on its back a saddle-shaped mark. The leaves of the aspen quiver because it stood on Mount Calvary at the time of the Crucifixion, or because it is the tree on which Judas hanged himself.

8. *Miscellaneous animal and plant lore.*

*E. g.*, Snakes will not crawl over ash-wood. If a snapping turtle bite you, he will not let go until it thunders.

<sup>1</sup> All omens are popularly known, and must be asked after, as "signs."

<sup>2</sup> This class overlaps the preceding one, and there is much witchcraft implied in both classes.

9. *Superstitions regarding human hair, teeth, nails, excreta, etc.*<sup>1</sup>

*E. g.*, The combings of the hair must not be thrown away, but burned. If they were thrown away, birds might get them and cause headaches for the owner of the combings; or the birds might carry the hair to hell, making it necessary to take a trip thither for its recovery. You must n't cut the nails on Friday, or the Devil will get them and make a comb of them to comb your hair with. The placenta of the human mother, after delivery, must be burned, not thrown away; otherwise the mother will not recover promptly.

10. *Saliva charms and superstitions concerning saliva of men and of animals.*

*E. g.*, Moistening the eyes with saliva, especially fasting saliva, will relieve inflammation in them. If wood will not split, spit on it. If a bird flies into the house, it is an omen of death. As a charm to ward off the omen, spit on the floor, draw a circle around the saliva, then walk around the circle, with the back turned, and spit a second time. Making the sign of the cross under the knee with the finger moistened with saliva will cure a foot that is "asleep."

II. MISCELLANEOUS SUPERSTITIONS NOT INCLUDED IN ZOÖLOGICAL OR BOTANICAL MYTHOLOGY.

1. *Weather-lore.*

*E. g.*, From twelve till two tells what the day will do.

2. *Moon-lore.*

*E. g.*, Pickle your beef or pork only in "the increase of the moon," that it may not "shrink in the pot."

3. *Withershins.*

*E. g.*, The crank of a churn must be turned, or eggs or cake beaten, always in the same direction, usually "with the sun."

4. *Cures by means of amulets and incantations.*

*E. g.*, Red beads worn around the neck will prevent the nose-bleed. Sty on the eye can be cured by rubbing it with a gold ring.

5. *Omens from dreams.*

*E. g.*, It is unlucky to dream of straw.

6. *Omens from particular days, seasons, etc.*

*E. g.*, It is bad luck to begin any work on Friday.

7. *Omens of visitors.*

*E. g.*, Chairs standing back to back foretell the coming of a visitor.

8. *Money.*

*E. g.*, If one finds money and keeps it through the year, it will bring good luck.

<sup>1</sup> Many of these are of a character such as to render them unsuitable for publication, except in a scientific monograph of the subject.

9. *Death-omens.*

*E. g.*, A ringing (called "death-bell") in the ears is the sign of the approaching death of a dear friend.

10. *Wishing.*

*E. g.*, Wish while holding a lighted match until it goes out, and you will get your wish.

11. *Love and marriage omens.*

*E. g.*, To be married in a brown dress brings the bride good luck.

12. *Love charms and divinations<sup>1</sup> and philters.*

*E. g.*, Name the bed-posts, upon going to bed, after unmarried acquaintances. The post first seen upon awakening represents the one you will marry. Carrying bones of a toad from which the flesh has been eaten by ants will compel the affections of the opposite sex.

13. *Nurses' signs.*

*E. g.*, Some one article of an unborn infant's wardrobe must be left unmade or unbought, or the child may not live.

14. *Omens and conclusions from human features, markings, or other peculiarities.*

*E. g.*, Hazel eyes indicate a pleasant disposition. One born with two crowns (*i. e.*, spots at the upper back part of the head from which the hair radiates) will break bread in two kingdoms.

15. *Wart-cures and causes of warts.*

*E. g.*, Stick a pin into the wart, throw the pin away, and the finder will have a wart, while your own will disappear.

16. *Children's superstitions, superstitious customs, and sayings.**Superstition.*

*E. g.*, Hold a pebble under the tongue while running, and you will not get out of breath.

*Custom.*

*E. g.*, Count the cracks in the board sidewalk or a board fence while passing along. The spaces between the cracks are said to be "poison."

*Saying.*

*E. g.*, In making a solemn asseveration, say, "I cross my heart," to give the statement almost the force that would be attached to a statement made by an adult under oath.

*Fanny D. Bergen.*

<sup>1</sup> Love divinations are very generally known as "projects."

PART II.

I. CUSTOMS.

1. *Customs connected with particular days.*

Christmas in North Carolina is celebrated with noise, firing of guns, etc., and is not a season for presents. — Maskings in the streets, in some places, are still kept up on certain days. — Hallowe'en usages are universally known. — On the eastern shore of Maryland, Shrove Tuesday (Tuesday previous to Lent) is called Pancake Day ; in each house are made rich cakes of this description, which serve as the principal part of one meal.

2. *Customs relating to human life, especially birth, courtship, marriage, and death.*

The practice of carrying a baby upstairs before it is taken downstairs. The usages of "bundling" and "sparking." — The "Infare," or reception given to a bride at the house of her father-in-law, as formerly in use in Ohio and other Western States. — The habit of covering the mirror, or inverting pictures, after death. — The manner of proceeding to the grave. — In North Carolina it is customary, a year after the death of any person, to hold a preaching, called "funeral."

3. *Social Customs.*

The gatherings formerly usual, under the names of "bees," "quiltings," "house-raisings," and other assemblies in which the community took part in the labor of an individual.

4. *Table Customs.*

The practice, formerly observed, of consuming everything placed upon one's plate, or, by a diversity of usage, of leaving some portion. — Characteristically local dishes, service, or manners. — In former times, in Ohio, it was common for children to stand at table, being expected to assist in waiting.

5. *Customs of Dress.*

In New England it is still common for women to wear necklaces consisting of gold beads, it being formerly usual to purchase these beads one by one, as a mode of investing savings.

6. *Religious Customs.*

Among the Moravians of Bethlehem, Pa., marriages were formerly, in a measure, determined by lot. — Usages of peculiar sects, as Dunkards, Mennonites, etc. ; those of Mormons ; of Voodoos, in the Southern States among negroes, a subject concerning which some uncertainty exists ; of faith-healers and clairvoyants ; in general, local religious practices having peculiar characteristics.

7. *Miscellaneous Customs.*

Customs of work belonging to primitive social conditions, as baking in the old-fashioned brick oven, beating clothes with the paddle

or "pounder" in washing, as now practiced in North Carolina and formerly in Ohio; making beer in the spring from spruce and other twigs; gathering of simples for medical use (query, by the light of the moon?); covering up the fire in order to obtain a light in the morning. — Customs of asseveration and obligation; it is said that in secluded districts in North Carolina a person who has received an insult may cut in his arm a "vengeance-mark" in the form of a cross, requiring the offence to be avenged.

## II. GAMES.

### 1. *Ring-games.*

"Ring round the rosy." — "Oats, pease, beans, and barley grows." (See "Games and Songs of American Children," Harper & Brothers, New York, 1888.)

### 2. *Games in which stories are acted out.*

The game of "Old Witch," as played by girls, in which children are stolen by a witch and afterwards recovered.

### 3. *Games of action.*

Tag, with its many varieties. The primitive idea seems to have pursuit by a witch, against whose power the touch of iron was a protection; hence the name, "iron-tag."

### 4. *Games of gesture.*

Children's games with the fingers and toes. Knee-games and knee-songs.

### 5. *Games of skill.*

"Tit tat to, three in a row." Often played in the ashes.

### 6. *Games with implements.*

Old-fashioned games of ball and marbles, with their rules and formulas. — Also here may also be mentioned oracles with dandelion stamens, apple-seeds, etc.

### 7. *Counting-out rhymes.*

"Eny, meny," etc. A collection has been made by H. Carrington Bolton, "Counting-out Rhymes of Children," New York, D. Appleton & Co., 1888. See "Journal of American Folk-Lore," 1889, p. 33.

### 8. *The "times" of sports.*

"Marble-time," "hoop-time," etc.

## III. SONGS.

### 1. *Old English ballads.*

Oh who will shoe your feet, my dear,  
Or who will glove your hand,  
Or who will kiss your red rosy cheeks,  
When I'm in the foreign land?

(*Fragment from North Carolina.*)

2. *Colonial ballads.*

3. *Songs of Negroes.*

These present a field for research, both in respect of the words and the music. But it will soon be too late.

4. *Songs of children.*

"I'll give to you a paper of pins,  
And that's the way my love begins."

IV. TALES.

1. *Fairy tales.*

There is a story of a hero who comes to the house of a giant, obtains the love of the giant's daughter, is set to perform certain tasks, which are accomplished by the aid of animals, ants, birds, etc., and finally escapes with the maiden. Such tales, not dependent on print, still exist in America, although sparingly.

2. *Animal folk-tales.*

The stories of Uncle Remus, Tales of the Fox, the Bear, etc., were formerly told in English also.

3. *Comedies or jests.*

"Johnny-cake" ("Journal of American Folk-Lore," vol. ii. 1889, p. 60), a tale in which the cake, while warming at the fire, being alarmed at the prospect of being eaten, takes flight, and is vainly pursued by various characters, but finally caught by a fox.

4. *Local legends.*

In a New England town, where certain tracks exist in the rock, it is related that they are the prints of the feet of an Indian demon who was in the habit of descending from his den in the neighboring mountain, in order to carry off maidens. In the West there is a crop of legends connected with the settlement, which have recently grown up about localities. Thus a tree springs up in a certain spot to commemorate the birth of a child, or a rock opens to protect a woman from the pursuit of savages. (See *Legends of Iowa*, "Journal of American Folk-Lore," ii. 287.

5. *Witch-tales and ghost-tales.*

In a Massachusetts town is told a story of a traveller who was drowned by being overtaken by a flood. At the same time, at a distance, a witch was seen to pour water into the river, thus creating a storm.

6. *Narratives.*

Any local stories of a quaint character, or tending to illustrate former times. — Descriptions of the character and conversation of types which are disappearing.



## V. RHYMES.

"The twelve days of Christmas," "Monday's child is fair of face." — In general, any rhymes seeming to possess quaintness or originality, belonging to any of the classes familiar through printed collections of nursery rhymes.

## VI. FORMULAS.

"I see the moon, and the moon sees me ;  
God bless the moon, and God bless me."

When children see the word *Preface*, they repeat a rhyme forming an acrostic. ("Journal of American Folk-Lore," 1891, p. 55.)

## VII. RIDDLES.

"Round the house, round the house, drop a white glove in the window." (The snow.) "Four down-hangers, four stiff-standers, two lookers, two crookers, and a whisk-about." (A cow.)

## VIII. PROVERBS.

"Them as knows nothin', fears nothin'." "Joy go with you and a good breeze after you." — The collection of original American proverbs and sayings has hitherto been very trifling, yet many exist.

## IX. PHRASES.

"A perfect Nimshi." "Everything is all criss-cross." "To be off like a jug-handle." "To feel like a stewed witch."

## X. WORDS.

Any rare, quaint, or dialectic words, or words used in unusual senses. For example : —

*Culch*, *Enchouse*, *Finnicky*, *Keeping-room*, *Kerhoot*, *Kitcaboodle*, *Mosey*, *Pernickety*, *Pudgicky*, *Spon-image*, *Wudget*, *Dust*, *Hetchel*, *Faze* or *Phase*, *Ree Horse* or *Rhea Horse*, *Red-Kaim* or *Redding-Kaim*. (From the *Waste-Basket of Words*, "Journal of American Folk-Lore," 1891, p. 70.)

*W. W. Newell.*